

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

The present request is submitted in response to the final Office Action dated November 7, 2005, which set a three-month period for response, making this amendment due by February 7, 2006.

Claims 11 and 16-20 are now pending in this application.

In the final Office Action, claims 11-13 and 19 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,954,296 to Ott (Ott '296). Claims 11, 12, and 14 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. 2002/0043729 to Ott (Ott '729). Claims 11, 12, and 15 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. 2002/0109247 to Jager et al. Claims 15-18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103 (a) as being unpatentable over Jager et al. Claim 20 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ott '296.

In the present amendment, claim 11 has been amended to add the features of claim 15 to more clearly define the present invention over the newly cited references. Claims 12-15 have been canceled.

Specifically, amended claim 11 now defines that the "profiled support member has a circular cross-sectional configuration, wherein said elastic tube encases said profiled support member, and wherein recessed areas are disposed on sides of said profiled support member".

The cited reference to Jager, cited in support of the rejection of claim 15 under 35 U.S.C. 103, does not show a support member with a round/circular cross-sectional configuration. Rather, the Jager support member has the shape of an "8" and simply cannot be viewed as being circular or round.

Claim 11, as amended, therefore defines the present invention over the cited references, since neither the primary reference to Ott nor Jager discloses or suggests a support member with a round/circular cross-sectional configuration.

In view of the foregoing, the Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of the allowability of claims 11 and 16-20 of the present application. In addition, should the Examiner have any further comments or suggestions, the undersigned would very much welcome a telephone call from him in order to discuss any outstanding issues and to expedite placement of the application into condition for allowance.

Respectfully submitted,



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